

VZCZCXRO5647
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHAM #4693/01 3301700
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 261700Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1026
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 AMMAN 004693

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NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2017
TAGS: [JO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIES FOR JORDAN'S NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: A. AMMAN 4559
[1](#)B. AMMAN 4676

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) In the wake of November 20 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Marouf Bakhit submitted his resignation to the King November 22, paving the way for a new government. On November 23, the King designated Nader Dahabi as the new Prime Minister, and the new cabinet was sworn in on November [1](#)25. Bios of Dahabi and his cabinet follow.

Nader Dahabi
Prime Minister

[1](#)2. (SBU/NF) An East Banker, Dahabi was born October 7 1946 in Amman. Dahabi holds a BSc from the Greek Air Force Academy, along with a Masters degrees in Public Administration from Auburn University and a degree in Aeronautical Engineering from Cranfield Institute of Technology in the United Kingdom. A career air force officer, Dahabi became President and CEO of government-owned Royal Jordanian Airlines upon his retirement from the military, a post which he held from 1994 to 2001. He then served a short stint as Minister of Transport from 2001 to 2002. After his ministerial tenure, Dahabi took up the chairmanship of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZA) in 2004.

[1](#)3. (C) The choice of Dahabi as Prime Minister represents the palace's desire to fill the position with an East Banker whose tribal and military background comforts the monarchy's loyal base, but whose career demonstrates the ability to effectively implement a reform agenda. It also represents the hope for smooth intra-governmental relations. Dahabi's brother Mohamad is the head of the powerful General Intelligence Directorate (GID), and it is expected that the relationship between the royal court, the GID, and the government will be smoother under this government than previous ones. Critics will likely claim that the familial connection in these two critical posts is a fundamental conflict of interest, but this argument neglects the new PM's standing as a strong and successful public figure in his own right.

[1](#)4. (C) During his tenure as ASEZA Commissioner, Dahabi worked extensively with USAID on local development projects. He is seen in the development community as an extremely effective technocrat who knows how to get things done. He is well-connected in the private sector, and in Aqaba succeeded in attracting investment from many international firms. Some have described Dahabi as essentially a "small Prime Minister" in Aqaba, where he had extensive exposure to the bread-and-butter economic issues that drove the parliamentary campaigns and drive the king's reform agenda (Ref A). He understands the relationship between poverty, unemployment, and youth issues in particular. He has also worked on the

hot button issue of foreign laborers.

¶5. (C) Dahabi is known as an operator who concentrates on top-down change rather than consultative reform from the grass roots. He was criticized as disconnected from local community organizations during his tenure in Aqaba, and retained cool working relationships with NGOs until appointing a competent liaison to handle that portion of his portfolio. He is known as a blunt person who, rather than hiding behind a public persona, sets clear goals and expects partners and subordinates to follow through. He sets clear guidelines for action when they are necessary.

¶6. (C) The new PM is expected to focus on domestic development issues and fiscal reform, and not meddle in foreign relations, as indicated in the King's designation letter. He will likely face a challenge in dealing with the new parliament. The new lower house comes out of a competitive campaign season and is eager to show activity, but the direction of that energy is far from certain; the previous parliament proved effective at blocking or slowing key pieces of economic reform legislation. Dahabi will have to corral a multitude of independent (and often conflicting) interests in order to effectively implement the extensive reform agenda envisioned by the King. Given long-term relationships with USAID, contractors, and the development community, Dahabi sees the U.S.-Jordan partnership as positive and productive. Since he understands the international workings of aid and investment, he is likely to seek detailed and feasible solutions to Jordan's needs internationally.

¶7. (U) Dahabi is married, with two sons and one daughter. He speaks English and Greek.

AMMAN 00004693 002 OF 007

Salah Bashir
Foreign Minister

¶8. (SBU/NF) Born in 1966, Bashir is considered to be an East Banker, though his mother is of Palestinian origin. Bashir's father was Minister of Health when he died in the 1977 helicopter crash that also killed Queen Alia, King Hussein's third wife. His mother is Haifa Bashir, a long time civil society activist who is currently president of the White Beds Society, a charity that assists Jordanians who are elderly and poor. Bashir obtained his BA in Law from the University of Jordan in 1987, an MA in Law from Harvard Law School, and a PhD in Civil Law from McGill University in 1996. Bashir began his career as a research assistant at McGill, and went on to become an adjunct professor of Law at the University of Jordan in 1996. In 1997, he also became a managing partner at Abu Ghazaleh Legal Services, serving as a legal advisor on international affairs. Bashir was appointed as a member of the King's Economic Consultative Council in 1999. Bashir was appointed as Minister of Trade and Industry in 2001. He held that post (surviving a cabinet re-shuffle) until 2003, when he became Minister of Justice, while at the same time holding the title of Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs. After another cabinet shuffle in 2005, he briefly held the position of Minister of Government Performance. Since the appointment of the Bakhit government in November 2005, Bashir has been in private legal practice.

¶9. (SBU) His expertise in international law mostly extends to trade and economic issues. He is considered an expert on WTO law and international trade, having prepared a study of investment-related licensing procedures in Jordan and assisted in drafting recommendations for procedural reforms.

¶10. (C) As Justice Minister, Bashir was an active partner in implementing a USAID judicial reform program, but suffered from a strong backlash because of his refusal to make judicial appointments and other personnel choices based on

tribal and political favoritism. In one famous episode, he was assaulted by the father of a jilted office seeker and had to restrain his own tribe from seeking revenge. He was also accused during his time as Justice Minister of a conflict of interest between his role on Jordan's WTO accession negotiation team and his private sector job as a lawyer. At the time, politically-motivated rumors circulated that Bashir was ordering up policies that would benefit his firm. In response to this, Bashir turned over his stake in the firm to his wife, and recused himself from any negotiations that would have furthered the conflict of interest claims.

¶11. (C) Bashir is trusted by the King and is a close confidant of the new Chief of the Royal Court Bassem Adwallah (former office director for the King). He has no foreign policy experience per se, but is intelligent and observant. He is also in step with the King's strategy and Jordan's relationship with the United States. The appointment of a new Foreign Minister ends what had become a dysfunctional relationship between the royal court and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the latter was frequently excluded from policy discussions.

¶12. (U) See Ref B for a detailed treatment of the new Foreign Minister.

Thouqan Qudah
Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs

¶13. (SBU/NF) Born in 1945 in Ein Janna, Qudah is a former air force officer. He rose to the rank of brigadier general, and was later appointed director of the Air Force Command Bureau, and administrative director of the Air Force. Upon his retirement from the military, Qudah served as a financial and administrative assistant in the Civil Aviation Authority.

Omar Shdeifat
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

¶14. (SBU/NF) An East Banker, Shdeifat has a PhD in linguistics from the University of Illinois, and was a professor of English at Aal Al-Bayt University and Mu'ta University. A former secretary general in the Ministry of Education, Shdeifat has served on the board of the Fulbright Commission since 2005. Before becoming a minister, he was the president of Hashemiya University. He went on a Voluntary Visitor program on higher education in the United States in 1993, when he was an assistant to the president of Aal Al-Bayt University.

AMMAN 00004693 003.3 OF 007

Abdul Rahim Okour
Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs

¶15. (SBU/NF) Born in 1939, Okour is of Palestinian origin. He graduated with a BA in Shari'a from the University of Damascus in 1966, and worked as a secondary school teacher and university professor at Yarmouk University. He served in the Parliament for eight years as a representative from Irbid, and was also a member of the Irbid consultative council. Okour is a former member of parliament from the Islamic Action Front, the political wing of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood.

Nasser Judeh
Minister of State for Media and Communication

¶16. (C/NF) Judeh is elevated to ministerial status in this cabinet - his previous job was as official government spokesman for the Bakhit cabinet. Judeh was born in Amman in 1960, and holds a BA in International Relations from American

University and an MA from Georgetown. He has previously served at the Royal Court, first in King Hussein's Press Office and later as private secretary to Prince Hassan. In 1992 he was posted to London to establish and head the Jordan Information Bureau. Judeh was appointed director of Jordan Television in 1994, and director of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation in 1998. He is a former Minister of Information, and is married to Princess Sumaya, President of the Royal Scientific Society and a daughter of Prince Hassan. He is the son of Sami Judeh, a former Minister of State. One of his uncles is former Prime Minister and current Speaker of the Senate Zaid Al-Rifa'i. He had hoped to be selected as Foreign Minister, for which he was shortlisted.

Eid Fayez
Minister of Interior

¶17. (SBU/NF) An East Banker, Fayez was born in 1945. Fayez returns as Minister of Interior after presiding over a successful parliamentary election season. Fayez obtained a BA in economics and political science from Beirut Arab University in 1970. He then worked as a businessman in the U.S. until 1983. He was appointed director general of the Jordanian-Iraqi Transport Company in 1983, director general of the Ports Corporation in 1986, and secretary general of the Ministry of Youth in 1990. He was made an advisor at the Royal Court in 1993, and subsequently served as Minister of Labor in 1999, and as Minister of Youth and State in 2001. He was appointed Minister of Interior in 2005 in the cabinet which was formed following the November 2005 Amman hotel bombings.

Sahl Majali
Minister of Public Works and Housing

¶18. (SBU/NF) Son of Parliament Speaker Abdulhadi Majali (who was re-elected to Parliament on November 20), Sahl is the longtime head of the family construction firm MID Contracting, which has had extensive dealings with construction projects in Iraq. Born in 1962, he is an East Banker who received his BA in civil engineering from the University of London and a Masters in construction from George Washington University. Majali was the head of the Jordan Contractors Association from 2000 to 2002 and from 2006 until his appointment as minister.

Tayseer Nueimi
Minister of Education

¶19. (C) Nueimi, an East Banker, is the former Secretary General in the Ministry. During the previous government, Nueimi ran the day to day operations of K-12 affairs, as the minister himself preferred to focus on higher education. He flourished in this role, earning a reputation as a well-versed and well-respected bureaucrat. Nueimi is highly supportive of USAID projects, and is described as a key interlocutor for the development community. He is seen as a tribal representative for the most part, but is also highly intelligent and known for his good memory in particular. Nueimi has never held such a public role as this and his new visibility may be a test. He participated in an International Visitor Leadership Program on the U.S. education system in 2004. Nueimi has a PhD in educational psychology from Petersburg University, and was previously a professor of psychology in Mu'ta University in Karak. He was

AMMAN 00004693 004 OF 007

also vice president of the National Center for the Development of Human Resources.

Alaa Batayneh
Minister of Transportation

¶20. (SBU/NF) Batayneh, an East Banker, is a former director of Jordan's customs service. This is his first ministerial appointment. He is married to a daughter of Prince Hassan. Note: Nasser Judeh, Minister of State for Media and Communication, is married to Prince Hassan's other daughter. End Note. Born in 1969 in Amman, Batayneh has a BS in electrical engineering and an MS in management information systems from George Washington University. In addition to his job as the head of the customs service, Batayneh was the Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport, and has also

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served as the Chairman of the Arab Bridge Maritime Company.

¶21. (C) Contacts were surprised when Batayneh stepped down suddenly several months ago. He was well-liked by his staff, and seen as a competent bureaucrat. Top officials and royal family members have been tight-lipped about what happened, but Batayneh in any event clearly hasn't suffered.

Ayman Odeh
Minister of Justice

¶22. (C) Odeh was born in 1961, and has a BA in law from the University of Jordan (1982), along with a Masters from the University of Miami (1984). He was a member of Jordan's first Anti-Corruption Commission, and served on the "We Are All Jordan" committee. Odeh, of Palestinian origin, is known as a close confidant of the previous minister, Sharif Al-Zubi. They are connected through Zubi's law firm, and Odeh was known to have regular input into Zubi's decision-making. It was known for some time that Zubi was uninterested in continuing as Minister of Justice, and Odeh has likely been groomed for this position for some time.

Maher Madadha
Minister of Public Sector Development

¶23. (C) An East Banker and former Secretary General at the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Madadha is taking on his first ministerial role. Seen by contacts as a less-than impressive figure, Madadha is likely to be eclipsed in the policy arena by the Prime Minister, and members of the royal court. Madadha holds a BA in economics and administration and an MA in finance. He worked in the Ministry of Planning as the chief of its external debts division, as well as Assistant Secretary General for administrative and financial affairs.

Khalid Irani
Minister of Environment

¶24. (SBU/NF) Irani returns to his job from the Bakhit cabinet. Born in 1964, Irani earned a BSc and MSc from the University of Jordan. Formerly a research assistant at the University of Jordan and manager of the Protected Areas Department at the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), Irani served as director general of the RSCN until his appointment as Minister during Badran's cabinet. He has worked closely with USAID on numerous projects, and has occasionally gone on hikes with embassy officers and their families. He is married and has two children. Irani traveled to the U.S. on an IV program in 1993. He is fluent in English.

¶25. (C) Irani is seen by USAID officers who have worked with him as an "idea guy" more than an administrator. That said, the ministry, which was established following the signing of the U.S. - Jordan FTA, has become a viable institution under his leadership. He is very bright and close to the Palace, due to his extensive work with the RSCN. He went on an International Visitor Leadership Program on national parks management in 1991.

Bassem Salem

Minister of Labor

¶26. (SBU/NF) A Christian East Banker, Salem returns as Minister of Labor. Born in 1956 in al-Husn in Irbid Governorate, and son of the late former Senator and Central Bank Governor Khalid Salem, Bassem Salem earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from the University of London in 1979. Upon his return to Jordan in the early 1980s, he

AMMAN 00004693 005 OF 007

started a manufacturing plant to produce plastics and packaging materials. He expanded his business into several manufacturing facilities, including confectioneries, as well as founding a trading company. He recently acquired one of the smaller mining operations that was privatized by the government. In the mid 1990s he co-founded the Jordan Export and Finance Bank, and still serves on its board. He also served as board member of the Central Bank of Jordan. Salem was Labor Minister briefly in 2005. Married with one son, Salem is fluent in English.

¶27. (C) Salem has recently concentrated his legal work on GOJ government contracts, especially tenders on big infrastructure projects, including USAID-funded projects. He has a cosmopolitan outlook, displays an obvious love for the law, and can converse easily on diverse subjects such as regional Arab artists. He travels to England regularly. When he was first appointed Minister, he was very optimistic that his "fresh" approach to government would help root out inefficiencies. After several months, that enthusiasm waned, but he sought to retain this portfolio to carry through labor sector reforms.

Amer Hadidi
Minister of Industry and Trade

¶28. (C) An East Banker and strong technocrat, this is Hadidi's first term as a minister. Born in 1968, Hadidi has a BSc in mechanical engineering from the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut. He then worked as a project engineer at the Industrial Development Bank, and served as Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport. He is a

SIPDIS
long-time participant in USAID projects through the Jordanian-U.S. Business Partnership. In the past, he was heavily involved with negotiating Jordan's Free Trade Agreements. USAID sees him as a marked improvement in terms of competency and overall knowledge when compared with his predecessor, although the task of running the ministry will be a challenge.

Abdul Fattah Salah
Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs

¶29. (SBU/NF) Salah returns as Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. An East Banker born in Maan in 1946, Salah holds a BA in Islamic Sharia from Damascus University, and has held several official posts prior to becoming Minister of Awqaf, including as secretary general of the Ministry. He also served as vice president of the Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Council, and deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the Da'wa and Usul College (a state-run Islamic community college). Salah served on the committee concerned with the renovation of the Aqsa Mosque and other Islamic sites in Jerusalem.

Nancy Bakir
Minister of Culture

¶30. (SBU/NF) A Circassian East Banker, Bakir was the former Assistant Arab League Secretary General for Social Affairs.

She was born in Amman in 1952. A Humphrey Fellow (1983-1984), Bakir holds an MS in Managerial and Educational Development from Boston University and also studied in the former Soviet Union. She served as the head of the human rights department at the Prime Ministry before joining the Arab League, and has also served as secretary general of the Ministry of Administrative Development and in several jobs in the higher council for science and technology. She was appointed an advisor to the Prime Ministry in 1999.

Hala Latouf
Minister of Social Development

¶31. (C) Of Palestinian origin, Latouf has an extensive resume that includes stints as head of Queen Rania's office, Secretary General of the Ministry of Planning, staffer at

SIPDIS
UNDP, and the head of several NGOs. She holds a BSc in economics and applied statistics from the University of Jordan, and an MSc in accounting and finance from the London School of Economics. Latouf is known as a highly competent, well-connected operator, and may signal greater space for civil society to operate in Jordan, as this ministry typically oversees NGO operations. She is a marked contrast to the conservative ministers who have previously occupied this position.

Khaldoun Qteishat

AMMAN 00004693 006 OF 007

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources

¶32. (SBU/NF) Born in 1959, Qteishat is an East Banker serving in his first ministerial post. He has a BA in electrical engineering from Ein Shams University in Cairo. Before becoming a minister, Qteishat served as Secretary General for the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and as director of its electricity department. He has also served as an instructor at Prince Feisal College.

Kamal Nasser
Minister of Political Development and Legal Affairs

¶33. (C) Of Palestinian origin, Nasser was born in the village of Ramin (near Nablus) in 1944. His BA is in law from Damascus University (1966), and his MA and PhD in maritime law are from Cairo University (1980). Nasser served as president of the Jordanian Bar Association for two consecutive terms in the 1990s, and was appointed Minister of Administrative Development in 1996. He has ties to the Palestinian Fatah movement, and was reported to be its candidate for the Bar Association head. He is active on human rights issues.

Muzahim Muhaisin
Minister of Agriculture

¶34. (SBU/NF) An East Banker, Muhaisin was born in Amman in ¶1948. He has a BSc in civil engineering from Ein Shams University in Cairo (1973). He was an assistant to the head of the Aqaba Regulatory Commission and later became the head of the commission's Land Department. He was Secretary General of the Aqaba Regional Authority from 1992 to 1997, and then became the Secretary General of the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, which he left in 1999. After serving two years as the Director General of the Vocational Training Corporation, he was appointed as Minister of Labor in 2001. After surviving several cabinet shuffles during this period, Muhaisin was appointed as Minister of Agriculture in 2005.

Bassem Roussan

Minister of Information and Communication Technology

135. (SBU/NF) An East Banker, Roussan was born in Amman in 1947. His BA is from Ein Shams University and MA is from Southern Methodist University, both in electrical engineering. Roussan served in the Jordanian air force communications department before joining FastLink (now Zain), a communications company and Jordan's first and leading provider of mobile phone services, in 1997. He served there as head of the engineering department and later as a vice president. Roussan was appointed as Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology in 2006.

Maha Khatib
Minister of Tourism and Antiquities

136. (C) An East Banker and former UNDP staffer and head of the Jordan River Foundation (a royally sponsored NGO), Khatib was considered for several previous cabinet positions. Note: She was originally offered a new ministry to direct project implementation, but was shifted to Tourism and Antiquities after Suhair Al-Ali turned down the Tourism Portfolio and retained Planning (which was to have been combined with Finance). End note. She is well connected in government circles, and is close to Queen Rania. Khatib has a BA in English literature from the University of Jordan and an MA in public administration from the American University of Beirut. After a brief professorial stint, Khatib joined the Ministry of Planning as the chief of its privatization unit.

Hamad Kasasbeh
Minister of Finance

137. (SBU/NF) Kasasbeh returns as Minister of Finance only, a post he assumed in September following the resignation of the previous minister over the GOJ's failure to lift fuel subsidies. Kasasbeh is an East Banker born in Karak in 1956. He earned a BA (1980) in Economics and a Masters in Statistics (1983) from the University of Jordan. He has a PhD in Economics from Colombia University (1990). Kasasbeh worked as an economic researcher and advisor at the Central Bank from 1980-1996, then was appointed General Manager of the Municipal Development Bank and served there until 1999. He authored fourteen publications in the field of finance and

AMMAN 00004693 007 OF 007

taught at the University of Jordan. He was Secretary General of the Auditing Bureau from 1999 until 2003, when he became Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance. Kasasbeh, an

SIPDIS
experienced technocrat, favors elimination of Jordan's subsidy programs, and will be tasked with implementing tough economic reform measures amidst growing inflation and rising prices for basic commodities.

Suhair Al-Ali
Minister of Planning and International Cooperation

138. (C) Of Palestinian origin and the only woman in the previous Bakhit cabinet, Al-Ali holds a master's degree in development economics from Georgetown University. She served as general manager of the Saudi American Bank Representative Office from 1993 until 1996, when she became general manager and country officer of Citigroup in Jordan. She served as Minister of Planning and International Cooperation in the last cabinet; she was to move to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities but resisted and secured her previous job. Al-Ali is married to Royal Jordanian Airlines senior executive Hussein Dabbas; the couple has two children. She is fluent in English.

Salah Mawajdeh
Minister of Health

¶39. (SBU/NF) Mawajdeh returns as Minister of Health from the previous cabinet, which he joined in September. Mawajdeh is an East Banker born in Amman in 1957. He studied medicine at the University of Jordan and later received his masters and doctorate degrees in Health Policy and Management from Johns Hopkins University. Mawajdeh has worked in several roles in the health sector since 1983. He published more than 20 scientific and books and papers and participated in numerous seminars worldwide. In 1994, he was awarded the WHO Gender and Tropical Diseases Award for his paper "The Assessment of the Quality of Parental Care in Irbid, North Jordan: Women's Perspective." Mawajdeh served as Director of the Jordan Food and Drug Administration and as Regional Coordinator of the Reproductive Health Working Group in the Population Council in Cairo.

Raed Abu Saud
Minister of Water and Irrigation

¶40. (C/NF) A Palestinian-origin Jordanian born in Amman in 1957, Abu Saud has a BA in civil engineering from the University of Miami. He was the head of the administration and water unit at the Ministry of Water from 2000 to 2003, and directly supervised the rehabilitation of Amman's water networks. He previously served as Minister of Public Works and Minister of Housing. He was a crony of ex-GID Director Saad Khayr, now in disgrace.

Shehadeh Abu Hdeib
Minister of Municipal Affairs

¶41. (SBU/NF) Abu Hdeib has a BS in civil engineering from the University of Texas. He has worked in various positions in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Amman Municipality. From 2000 to 2004, he was the director general of the Petra Region Authority. Since 2004, Abu Hdeib has served as the director general of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation.
Hale